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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR PTER FR

SUBJECT: TERRORISM INVESTIGATING JUDGE COMMENTS ON ONGOING
C/T ACTIVITIES

REF: PARIS 3989

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT, FOR REAS
ONS 1.4 B/D

¶11. (S) Summary: Terrorism investigating judge Jean-Francois Ricard (strictly protect) discussed his office's ongoing C/T activities November 3, including the possible upcoming release of two ex-GTMO detainees and the continued investigation of three separate terrorist cells discovered in ¶2005. The discovery of these cells is the reason for Interior Minister Sarkozy and PM Villepin's recent public warnings regarding terrorist threats to France. Ricard also analyzed the current unrest in Paris suburbs, saying no one in the GOF should be surprised by what is happening (septel). End summary.

POSSIBLE RELEASE OF 2 EX-GTMO DETAINEES

¶12. (S) The investigating judges assigned to the ex-GTMO detainee case (Ricard and Bruguiere) have come to the conclusion that most, if not all, are not "big fish," said Ricard. He still believes he has enough to bring some to trial. However, he is close to recommending the release of 2 ex-GTMO detainees, Nizar Sassi and Mourad Benchellali, due to lack of sufficient evidence. (Note: Reftel describes their situation in greater detail. Sassi and Benchellali were captured in Afghanistan and were part of the first group returned to France. Their lawyers filed a civil suit in French courts over what they described as their illegal arrest and imprisonment in GTMO. End note) If Sassi and Benchellali are released, 3 ex-GTMO detainees will remain in pre-trial detention. Ricard plans on finishing the case and going to trial sometime in 2006. Although he said a final decision has not been made regarding Sassi and Benchellali's release, he believes it may occur by the end of the month.

DISCOVERY IN 2005 OF THREE TERRORIST CELLS CAUSES HIGH-LEVEL
GOF CONCERN

¶13. (S) Ricard said it appears that three separate terrorist groups have been discovered in 2005, although French authorities do not believe they have found everybody belonging to these groups. They include the GSPC-linked group led by Safe Bourada (who was arrested in September), an Algerian-linked group about which very little is known, and a Montpellier-based group linked to Iraq, although little is known of this group as well. Ricard said Interior Minister Sarkozy is intimately aware of and involved in the conduct of these ongoing investigations. The three groups are the cause of high-level concern because all three appear to be independent, and clearly have targeted France. All appear to have links, whether important or incidental, with Syria, Egypt, and/or Iraq. Against this backdrop, Sarkozy and Villepin have increased their public warnings regarding potential terrorist threats, said Ricard. He added that the GOF has not uncovered any imminent plots, but the simple fact that possibly three independent groups have been discovered in France in 2005 is worrying enough.

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[http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.c fm](http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm)
Stapleton